

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1.(currently amended): An orderwire controller which controls orderwire circuits to provide maintenance people with voice communication facilities, comprising:

a plurality of mixing means, disposed in a junction node at which a plurality of ring networks meet, each for mixing orderwire signals together of a specified group of ring networks; and

combination control means, disposed in the junction node, for directing each of said plurality of mixing means as to which ring networks should form a group for sharing orderwire functions thereof for controlling combinations of the orderwire signals to be mixed.

2.(original): The orderwire controller according to claim 1, further comprising digital code conversion means for performing signal conversion between an A-law coded or Mu-law coded orderwire signal and a linear coded digital voice signal.

3.(original): The orderwire controller according to claim 1, wherein said plurality of mixing means add up the orderwire signals in a digital fashion.

4.(original): The orderwire controller according to claim 1, wherein said plurality of mixing means mix the orderwire signals sent from network elements in at least one ring network.

Claims 5-6 (cancelled)

7.(currently amended): An orderwire control system which controls orderwire circuits to provide maintenance people with voice communication facilities, comprising:

- (a) a plurality of ring networks in which a plurality of nodes are interconnected in a ring topology; and
- (b) an orderwire controller disposed in a junction node at which a plurality of ring networks meet, comprising:

a plurality of mixing means each for mixing orderwire signals together, of a specified group of ring networks, and
combination control means directing each of said plurality of mixing means as to which ring networks should form a group for sharing orderwire functions thereof for controlling combinations of the orderwire signals to be mixed.

Claims 8-9 (cancelled)